

## THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS.

BY WILLIAM BENJAMIN SMITH.

TO-DAY a book on the Historicity of Jesus<sup>1</sup> has certainly the merit of being timely. In recent years the gravest doubt has been cast upon the well-nigh universally accepted dogma of the human life of the Galilean Jesus, and there is certainly wide room for the production of proofs of that dogma, proofs more cogent than any yet adduced. Not only room, but indeed urgent demand. Of course, the most obvious and approved method of dealing with such doubts is to ignore them. This method has been very widely adopted, even by the highest authorities, and has indeed been publicly recommended by the very highest as the only fitting and effective procedure. We have been told almost in so many words, that persons who raise such doubts, who do not perceive intuitively the correctness of the dogma in question, who see the historical process in some other light than does the German theological, in particular the "liberal," professorate, have really no right to be heard or even to speak in such matters. Hence the present well-nigh unexampled muzzlement of the European press, which reduces freedom of speech to the merest mockery. From Germany, from Norway, from England, from Scotland, as well as from America come regrets from high-placed university professors and distinguished men of letters that it is discouragingly difficult, if not practically impossible, to bring before the public any reasoned "unprejudiced" presentation of the matter in dispute, at least any at all favorable to the radical contention. Said one German editor, in rejecting the manuscript of an excellent scholar and author, "I do not wish to disturb the religious slumber of the people." In the March number of the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> *The Historicity of Jesus, A Criticism of the Contention that Jesus never Lived, a Statement of the Evidence for His Existence, an Estimate of his Relation to Christianity.* By Shirley Jackson Case, of the Department of New Testament Literature and Interpretation in the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.

*Theologisch Tijdschrift* appears an elaborate article in German on the Pauline testimony, establishing the conclusions already reached in *Ecce Deus* (pp. 148-163). The author, Schläger, explains that he had in vain sought to find a German periodical that would publish his article, which is able, temperate, thorough, erudite, in every way unexceptionable, save that it favors the new criticism. An illustrious biblicist writes that any public discussion of *Ecce Deus* seems at present unadvisable, so impossible is it to hope for any open expression of assent even from the most thoroughly convinced German theologian.

Can this throttling continue? To be sure, the wisdom of the ostrich is wonderful and admired of all men; no doubt it is very judicious to crawl under the bed during a tempest of thunder and lightning. Yet under some circumstances, even such drastic prudential measures may prove unavailing. By some unforeseen chance the detested doctrine may leak out, it may reach the mind and even the heart of some earnest popularizer, and suddenly a continent may be shaken with discussion, or, as Harnack puts it, some "uninvited dilettant" may "disquiet all Christendom." When the public mind is in a highly inflammable state, even a single vagrant spark may enkindle a conflagration that not even the whole press of Europe can smother with brochures. So at least it seems that Prof. Shirley Jackson Case has thought, and he has therefore wisely determined to come out into the open, well knowing there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. In the book in hand he casts aside all the cautionary counsels so generally followed, he admits that the question of historicity is a real one, that it has received no adequate treatment from the liberal criticism, that it can no longer be waived aside with the conventional air of superior wisdom, and he accordingly devotes a volume to its discussion. The author has undoubtedly brought skill and learning to his task. His footnotes, designed for the scholar rather than for the general reader, offer a long list of titles and bear witness to a wide acquaintance with the relevant literature. It is particularly pleasing to note the recognition accorded to Bruno Bauer, for more than half a century the *bête noire* of criticism both conservative and liberal, rarely enough mentioned and then only that he might be despised. Professor Case has laid aside the habitual sneer of his predecessors and not only treats Bauer with respect, but would even seem to accord him almost the first place not merely chronologically but also logically among the "extremists." He says, "Bruno Bauer, as we have already observed, was gradually led to his conclusions by his critical examination of the gospels and

the Pauline epistles. Consequently the formulation of a new theory of Christian origins was the last stage in his work. To-day this process is usually inverted. The radicals come to the study of the New Testament with a fixed notion of the way Christianity arose, hence they are not greatly concerned with the Christian literature except to demonstrate that its content can be explained in accordance with their hypothesis" (p. 66).

It seems a pity that one could do justice to the dead only at the cost of injustice to the living. I presume not to speak for others, but as a characterization of my own methods and way of approach to the problem, the quoted statement is simply the *truth completely inverted*. It was only by a long series of Bible (particularly New Testament) studies, begun in early college years and maintained with steadily increasing interest, under guidance of the same order of lights (the liberal critics) that Professor Case so enthusiastically follows, that I was finally brought to recognize the blind alley into which they lead, to see the utter impossibility of explaining by means of the liberal theory *any* of the pivotal facts of proto-Christianity, such as the *primitive worship of Jesus as God*, the *mission to the Gentiles*, the *extremely rapid diffusion of the propaganda*, the *preaching of Paul*, and the *absence of the human personality* (the liberal Jesus) from old Christian literature. The only "fixed notion" brought to the "study of the New Testament" was exactly the "fixed notion" that Professor Case has himself always brought and still brings and will alas! perhaps forever bring, the "fixed notion" of the pure-human Jesus as the fount and origin of Christianity, a "fixed notion" derived precisely whence he has derived it, from the study of liberal (particularly, German) criticism. My present position was gained only by abandonment of Professor Case's own "fixed notion," by reluctant recognition of its total inadequacy. Any one that has read either of my German books must perceive that this abandonment was necessitated by persistent probing of the New Testament. Such at least is the impression made on the unsympathetic mind of such a scholar as Fiebig, else he would not have applied the term *rühmlich* to those New Testament studies. At any rate this general state of case is clearly set forth in the *Vorrede* to *Der vorchristliche Jesus*, so clearly, one would think, as to forestall intentionally any such error as Professor Case's and to make his representation peculiarly puzzling. If now it be replied that the words are, "To-day this process is *usually* inverted," not *universally*, and that room is left for a trifling exception, the answer is that such a reply is not satisfactory, that it does not mend matters, but makes

them worse. For the reader could not be expected to know the facts in the case, nor to make the proper exception; he is left with an impression that is distinctly false.

Returning from this disagreeable digression we may remark that the recognition of Bauer, however pleasing, is by no means so just, not to say generous, as that of Schweitzer (who does not agree with Bauer) in his "Quest of the Historical Jesus," by whom the stone that the builders rejected is unhesitatingly placed at the head of the corner. Read the emphatic paragraphs at the close of his eleventh chapter (pp. 159, 160). "The only critic with whom Bauer can be compared is Reimarus." "Bauer's 'Criticism of the Gospel History' is worth a good dozen Lives of Jesus." "Since Paul, no one has apprehended so powerfully the mystic idea of the supersensible *Body of Christ*." Such is the estimate, partially expressed, of the scholar that has mastered the literature of the subject (up to 1905) more comprehensively than has perhaps any other. Like Faust's punishment the judgment of posterity comes late but in ample measure.

Professor Case has intended to give a complete statement of the matter in hand, omitting no important phase of the great controversy. It seems strange in view of such an avowed purpose to find that many of the most highly significant considerations thus far advanced have not been mentioned at all. He has indeed thought it worth while to name the present writer some dozen times sporadically, whose contentions he has also sometimes accredited to others who had themselves adopted them, strangely enough preferring to quote his compatriot at second hand. Yet of only the first third or fourth of *Der vorchristliche Jesus* does he betray any knowledge; of the rest, which critics of the first rank have regarded as "particularly hard to refute" and as perhaps "the most valuable part of the work," he makes no mention. Nor does he seem to have met in its full force a single argument even of the portion he has considered. The only point whereon he has "dwelt thus at length" (pp. 102-110) is the witness of Epiphanius, on which the German critics have also labored most, not indeed as "representing the most substantial data," but because it was easiest here to raise a cloud of dust and to darken counsel by words without insight. With respect to these manifold and mutually contradictory "theological attempts" to explain away the Epiphanius-passages, it will be enough to quote the judgment of an opponent, Bousset (*Theol. Rundschau*, October 1911, p. 373), that they "must all be accounted failures." His own attempt does not come up here for consideration. After repeated readings it still



seems hard to make out just what our author does think on the subject, save that surely Epiphanius could not have testified against liberalism and Professor Case. Here are some of his main statements. "Epiphanius's thought is often very hazy, but on this subject he is perfectly clear. There was among the Jews even before the Christian era a heresy of the Nazarees; then came the Christian movement, which at first was known as the sect of the Nazorees and which finds its proper continuation, as Epiphanius takes great pains to prove, in the Catholic church; and finally there was a third class, who took upon themselves the primitive Christian name of Nazorees but who adhered so rigidly to Judaism that Epiphanius curtly remarks, 'they are Jews and nothing else.'"

"Whether there was ever such an array of sects bearing a similar name . . . may be questioned . . . But one thing at least is clear. His statements about Nazarees, Nasarees, Nazorees and Nazirees involve no ambiguity whatever as to the date of Christianity's origin. The traditional date is the only one suggested. Those who argue for a pre-Christian Jesus can find nothing for their purpose except the bare mention of the early existence of a Jewish Nazarite heresy. To prove the reliability of this statement, and to show further that the sect was 'Christian' in character, is another matter. Epiphanius supplies no argument for this. He does not even so describe the Nazarees as to suggest characteristics which show them to have been precursors of the Christian movement."

Such is Professor Case's treatment, and the reader may judge of the "total absence of bias," the "wholly unprejudiced spirit" of this "complete and unprejudiced statement," qualities indeed that one is sure to expect in theological works that stoutly uphold far-descended traditions. However, it seems a little queer that while discussing this Epiphanius-passage at such length he should forget entirely to remind the reader who first called attention to the passage, whom in fact he means by "those who argue for a pre-Christian Jesus." Why such a vague circumlocution in such a compact volume? The only justification lies in the odd *habit* of our author to avoid as far as possible the ill-omened name of the writer of *Der vorchristliche Jesus*. Aside from this very small but significant trifle, the main thing is that the ingenuity of Professor Case, no less than that of his German predecessors, shows itself impotent in presence of the "*Epiphaniusstelle*." In fact he makes no definable attempt at explanation. Apparently he admits the "*early*" (meaning the *pre-Christian*) "existence of a Jewish Nazarite heresy" (meaning *Sect of the Nazarees*, as elsewhere he grants "even before

the Christian era a sect of the Nazarees"). He also questions the attempt of Epiphanius to distinguish the "sects bearing a similar name." Herewith then he seems to concede practically everything in dispute. If the Nazarees were pre-Christian (as he apparently grants),<sup>2</sup> if Nazarees and Nazorees were only variants of the same name (as he seems to concede), as the manuscripts amply testify, and as common sense requires, then what remains? Irresistibly the proto-Christian movement is thrown back beyond our era, because Nazorees was an early name of Christians as Case admits and Acts attests (xxiv. 5). What then is meant by saying "His statements about Nazarees *et al.* involve no ambiguity whatever as to the date of Christianity's origin. The traditional date is the only one suggested"? This sounds very much like a lawyer who should admit that his client had been caught *in flagranti crimine*, and yet contend lustily that this cast no suspicion upon his innocence and no doubt upon his title to the stolen goods. To be sure, Epiphanius does not suggest any but the traditional date. But who ever hinted that he did? It is the traditional date that he strives so desperately to rescue. It was not necessary for him to suggest any other. *The pre-Christian date suggests itself* irresistibly in the admissions of Epiphanius. This Bishop of Constantia is a special pleader. He has studied most deeply and diligently about the Jewish sects and fortunately has learned too much. To his own confoundment he has discovered the pre-Christian Nazarees. What shall he do with them? A wiser man would have kept still as a mouse, but never the Bishop. He is too proud of his discovery. He must tell it abroad. But he "was swayed by a tremendous zeal for orthodoxy" (as Case declares, p. 106), "And for all the wealth of Indies would do nothing for to hurt her." Moreover, like modern liberals, he honestly believed the impossible, that he could in some way divide and conquer, could distinguish the Christian from the pre-Christian by a single vowel, could talk so long and so confusedly that the reader would finally lose the thread of thought and accept "the traditional date" out of mere exhaustion. This method of talking against time promised well, and even to-day the liberals seem to have found nothing better, but it cannot finally prevail. Ever more and more clearly come out the two cardinal and regulative facts, first pointed out (1904) by the present writer, that the Nazarees were certainly

<sup>2</sup> And as only deeply interested prepossession can any longer doubt. For Epiphanius is not only "perfectly clear," not only peculiarly well-informed, but he is testifying *against* himself, *against* the orthodoxy he loved with such infatuation; hence the unequivocal statement of this most learned of heresiographers must be taken not merely at its face value but at a very high premium.

pre-Christian and must not be distinguished from the Nazorees of the New Testament. It is puerile to make a mountain out of the molehill of difference between *a* and *o*, between forms that are interchangeable in manuscripts; as well distinguish between *lacruma* and *lacrima*, between *cpistula* and *epistola*, between *Vergil* and *Virgil*, or between *Leibnitz* and *Leibniz*. It is idle to say that Epiphanius insists upon the distinction. Of course he does: he had to do it; for he "was swayed by a tremendous zeal for orthodoxy," and orthodoxy was and is in extreme peril from his indiscreet discovery and publication. His confusion and contradictions spring from the same source and are just as natural as the confusion and contradictions that Bousset so regretfully acknowledges in Wernle, Weinel, Schwen, Schmidtke and the rest, to mention only Germans. All these "theological attempts must thus far be accounted failures," for they merely obscure the issue and hide the two hinges on which the whole controversy turns and to which not one of these many "attempts," not even this latest of Professor Case, can pretend to do any manner of justice.

The other less detailed treatments in this book are so inadequate that it seems strange that the author could himself have felt any satisfaction in them or have allowed either himself or his publisher to say that "the negative arguments are very carefully examined," when in fact the great majority of the most important have not been examined at all, not even mentioned, and even the few lightly taken up have been as lightly laid down again. The most serious treatment, that of the Epiphanian passage, we have just found to be without cogence or coherence, but the most serious defect of the whole book is its failure to take any notice of Drews's *Christusmythe, II. Teil*, or of Smith's *Ecce Deus*. Even most unfriendly critics declare these to be the most important appearances in the recent debate, while the more sympathetic are unreserved in their estimates.<sup>3</sup> Our author has read *Ecce Deus*, for he refers to it repeatedly, though not controversially, and presents an excessively meagre summary on page 50. But he nowhere essays any reply to the arguments advanced in that book. He does indeed seem to allude to the chapter on the "Silence of Josephus and Tacitus," only however in order to introduce a strange error into a footnote, p. 87: "This view (that the Tacitean passage has been interpolated) is mainly a reiteration of the doubts of Hochart." As I have studiously avoided reading

<sup>3</sup> Compare e. g. the reviews by Hertlein, Meyboom, Reinach, Ransom, Toy, Windisch, and others, note also that Bolland in his latest and greatest work *De groote Vraag* (not mentioned by Professor Case) adopts freely the results reached in *Ecce Deus*.

Hochart, and as there is not to my knowledge a single one of his arguments in my article, the reader may form his own judgment in the premises. On page 56 another highly characteristic footnote informs us that "W. B. Smith seems at present to be vacillating on this question: cf. *Ecce Deus*, p. 150." Of course it is not expected that the reader will actually "confer" with the page 150 or with any other page of *Ecce Deus*. He who by accident does so will not find there any faintest shadow of vacillation. The passage in question reads thus:

"What? Is not First Corinthians still earlier than Mark? We need not raise the whole Pauline question. That is quite another matter. For the purposes of this investigation (and only for these purposes) we may admit freely that this letter *as a whole* proceeds from Paul and is older than Luke and even Mark. This admission, however, implies not even for an instant that *this particular passage* is older than all the synoptics or proceeds from Paul. For it is surely a well-known fact that the original New Testament scriptures have been subjected to revision, redaction, and interpolation." Follows then an elaborate argument to show that in any case, whether the epistle as a whole be Pauline or un-Pauline, the passage in question (xi. 23 f.) presents a later secondary point of view in comparison with the earlier original view of chapter x. 16, 17. Any discussion of "the genuineness of the principal Pauline letters" is omitted with perfect logical propriety, not in vacillation, but simply and solely because it would be irrelevant. Such "vacillating" might be initiated by certain liberal critics, though it might reduce in some measure the gaiety of nations. This same minute treatment of the "Pauline witness" (*Ecce Deus*, 148-163), with which Heitmüller now seems to be in essential accord (see his *Taufe und Abendmahl im Urchristentum*, 64-69) and which Schläger has fully confirmed (*Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1912, II, 136-157), wherein I have consciously taken from no man, is once again delicately and appreciatively footnoted on p. 73 in the words, "W. B. Smith also falls into line here."

Mere trivialities these, yet they indicate better than aught else the spirit of the book in hand. Dismissing the ungrateful task of noting them we must now recall attention to the fact that Professor Case omits all discussion of the very *heart* and *nerve* of the most recent contention concerning the origins of Christianity. Fiebig has declared that the two questions raised by *Ecce Deus*: How far must the Gospel narratives be interpreted symbolically? and how far must proto-Christianity be understood as a monotheistic movement directed against polytheism? are now instant and call for decision.



That Professor Case should never mention them is a queer commentary on the profession: "No phase of any consequence in the history or in the present status of the problem has been ignored." It might seem that words are still used sometimes in a Pickwickian sense.

On the other hand our author has given ample space to Jensen and Robertson, not to mention Kalthoff, Lublinski, Niemojewski, and others. This it may be well to have done, but not to have left the other undone. As one of his sympathizers remarked about this book, "He shows great skill in selecting his opponents." Herein let it not be said that he "falls into line," but he marches in line with his European peers, all of whom, from Weiss to Weinell, from Jülicher to Wahrschauer, fall afoul of the writers named above and thrice slay the slain with pathetic unanimity and gusto, and like Case with this scrupulous tithe of mint, anise and cummin they quiet their consciences and think to absolve themselves from all weightier matters of discussion. "But what good comes of it at last?" is a very pertinent question for little Peterkin. Why "handle" these detachments so "mercilessly" while the main mass of the army moves on undisturbed?"<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the few shortcomings thus far noted and even in spite of some others, the book has decided merits, of which perhaps the chief is the summation (pages 269 f.) of "the evidence for Jesus's existence." It is too much the custom of the historicists to hide their light under a bushel, to hint vaguely that they have untold treasures of argument carefully locked up in safety deposits, the nature and extent of which they do not care to reveal. The present writer has tried repeatedly to get a peep at these garnered stores, but vainly thus far. In the *Theologische Revue* the learned Catholic, Kiefl, declares of *Ecce Deus*, "However trenchant and manifoldly correct the critique of the author is, yet the proof of his counter-hypothesis remains defective." At what point "defective" is not said, but the chief complaint is that Schmiedel's Pillars are so elaborately treated while the "other evidences" are rather ignored! But what are these "others"? The reviewer gives no indication. Schmiedel himself has declared that aside from such Pillars there exists no other clear evidence that Jesus as a man ever

<sup>4</sup> On p. 71 we are taught that "Smith's conclusions as to the Epistle to Romans have suffered severely under the criticism of Schmiedel." This information will be a delightful surprise to all readers of the only two articles in point (which Professor Case does not mention) in the *Hibbert Journal* (January and April, 1903), especially, I trow, to Professor Schmiedel himself. The capital "conclusion" that "Rome" is interpolated in Rom. i. 7, that in the elder form the "Epistle" was addressed to "all those in love of God," is now admitted fully both by Harnack and by Zahn.

lived at all (*Das vierte Evangelium*, p. 17). Hence the logical pre-eminence of the Pillar-passages. When some one produces "other evidences" of equal clearness, they will certainly receive equal consideration. Meantime to pursue the fleeting semblances of logical argument through the pages of Weiss, von Soden, and the rest is like chasing down a will-o'-the-wisp; to wander through their imposing syntactical structures is like threading one's way through the streets of Cloud-Cuckoo-Town.<sup>5</sup>

Wendland does indeed give an audible hint in his review of Reinach's *Orpheus* (*Theol. Literaturztg.*, 1910, No. 21, 644): he would rest the historicity on "the Aramaic basis of the Synoptics and the fact of a mission independent of Paul." Here are two arguments, quite independent mutually. Unfortunately it is hard to make a syllogism out of one premise, and in neither case does Wendland give any hint of what is the other premise; so we are left quite at a loss. In this perplexity it is a great relief to come upon Professor Case's summary, which declares: "The New Testament data are perfectly clear in their testimony to the reality of Jesus's earthly career, and they come from a time when the possibility that the early framers of tradition should have been deceived upon this point is out of the question. Not only does Paul make the historical personality of Jesus a necessary preliminary to his gospel, but the whole situation in which Paul moves shows a historical background in which memory of this individual is central. The earliest phases of Gospel tradition have their roots in Palestinian soil and reach back to the period when personal associates of Jesus were still living; while primitive Christology shows distinct traces of Jesus the man of Galilee behind its faith in the heavenly Christ. The disciples' personal memory of this Jesus of real life is also the fountain from which the peculiarly forceful type of the new community's vitality takes its start."

<sup>5</sup> E. g., "So it follows that in interpreting Jesus the category of supernaturalism is felt by many to be an inadequate way of picturing his worth, and this is not because he has lost significance but because the category has done so" (p. 313). How careless of the Category to lose its significance! "What! Lost your mitten? You naughty kitten! Then you shall have no pie." *En passant*, Category would seem to be almost as important in the Critique of the Pure-Human as in the "Critique of Pure Reason." With its artful aid you need no longer wonder whether Jesus actually raised a literal Lazarus from the dead; you need only select a Category under which adequately to represent him and picture his worth. It would be easy to fill volumes with choice cullings from the works of leading liberals, wherein vagueness and nebulousity of thought (so-called) are pushed beyond the bounds of cometary tenuity, but this expression would seem to do injustice to the comet, which is not all tail, but has a nucleus. Truly says Homer, "This way and that, wide is the range of words."

This seems to be a fuller and clearer statement of the "other evidences" than is elsewhere to be found in the same compass, and hereby Professor Case has made the public his debtor. A few observations may be permitted.

1. It seems noteworthy that the Pillars shine by their absence only. Professor Case would seem to regard them almost as lightly as Schmiedel regards all such "other evidences." This seems very remarkable, for Schmiedel is not alone in pinning his faith to the Pillars. Witness, e. g., Meltzer's *Zum Ausbau von Schmiedels Grundsäulen* (1911).

2. The favorite argument from the unique, incomparable, and quite uninventible Personality is likewise slurred, if not indeed wholly omitted. This seems even more remarkable still, for this has undoubtedly hitherto been the trump-argument of the liberals.

3. The assertion that "the New Testament data are perfectly clear etc." ignores the whole symbolic interpretation set forth in *Ecce Deus*. If this interpretation be in large measure correct, then the New Testament data would seem to be perfectly clear in their testimony *against* the historicity in question. Unless the error of that interpretation be shown, this leading argument in Professor Case's summary falls to the ground, and what is said about "the early framers of tradition etc." loses all its meaning.

4. What is said about Paul is not correct; it is rather the very *reverse* of the truth. See *Ecce Deus*, pp. 148-163, and Schläger's article already cited.

5. As to tradition rooting in Palestinian soil, this argument like Wendland's, tries to stand on one leg, which is uncomfortable for an argument. The only plausibility of such syllogisms lies in suppression of the major premise. When this is stated, it will be found either false or unrelated to the conclusion. As a matter of fact we have no reason to suppose this Christian movement originated in Palestine or in any other one place. The pictorial representation in the Gospel was *staged* in Palestine, and for the reason stated in Matt. iv. 15, 16, to fulfil the prophecy about the arising of the light on "Galilee of the Gentiles." Nearly all the topical references of the Gospels are derivable directly or indirectly from this *motif*, and it is noteworthy how much of the Gospel picture remains in the air without a local habitation and sometimes without even a name. In the Gospels the Judean ministry is an afterthought not present in the Logoi-source (Q), as Harnack now concedes, and is a highly elaborate reflection from the mirror of prophecy, sacred and profane.

6. "When personal associates of Jesus were still living" assumes everything in dispute, as indeed is elsewhere done in this book.

7. The closing sentence about "personal memory" sounds like a rather grudging concession to the old Personality-argument and is quite too vague to form any basis of discussion. That the *absence* of any such "personal memory" is a distinctive mark of the early preaching, is the conclusion reached in *Ecce Deus*.

In view of all the foregoing it seems doubtful whether the historicists will in general be grateful to the Chicagoan for his statement of the case.

But our author is not content with a discussion of the historical question. He treats of the dogmatic significance of the Jesus for Christianity and religion in general.<sup>6</sup> He would answer the question "What think ye of Christ?" We are interested in his own answer rather than in that of others, whose views he is at so much pains to present. Precisely what he thinks is not easy to make out: there is room for error in the most painstaking exegesis. He who expounds others clearly may not clearly expound himself. It would appear, however, that for Professor Case Jesus was a man, and nothing but a man; all trace of any peculiar divinity is erased from the picture entirely. Of course, he was a superior man. In what the superiority consisted, it would seem very hard to say. Again and again we are assured that Jesus had some very close communion with God, nothing however inimitable or unattainable by any of us sons of God. "The fundamental item in all Jesus's religious experience appears to be his abiding consciousness of fellowship with the Father." His program of salvation is accordingly said to be almost fatally simple: "become sons of God in childlike trustful fellowship, and under the inspiration of this fellowship live the life of unselfish service" (p. 297). Ethically and socially this Jesus seems to have given nothing new to the world. "Jesus lays down two controlling principles for the guidance of conduct; God is to be loved with full devotion of heart, soul, and mind, and one's neighbor is to be loved as oneself" (p. 301). It

<sup>6</sup> As do so many Germans, wherein they seem to be parleying for the most honorable terms of capitulation.—When "liberals," "though they stoutly defend Jesus's existence on historical grounds," yet "grant that Christianity would not collapse if belief in Jesus's historicity had to be surrendered"; when they gravely ask, "Is belief in the historicity of Jesus indispensable to Christian faith?" it is plain that they are setting their house in order and preparing to turn over the keys at a moment's notice. One is reminded of Byron's famous line but slightly varied:

"And vowing they would ne'er assent, assented."



seems queer that our author should write "lays down" when he means *quotes* (from the Law, Deut. vi. 4, 5, Lev. xix. 18). Common sense must pronounce this characterization to be pragmatically worthless, if not false; it is so vague as to be no characterization at all. But this very vagueness, however disastrous, is perfectly natural and more than justified. There is not recorded among "New Testament data" a single deed or a single word that the critic can refer with certainty or even great confidence to this "historic Jesus." Plainly then it is quite out of the question to find any clear intelligible characteristic of such a "personality." Professor Case has seized upon this sense of oneness with God, not because he has any proof of it in the New Testament or elsewhere, for he offers none and has none whatever, but because it seems to him to become well "the Historical Founder of Christianity"; whom the shoe fits, let him wear it. We would not undervalue any such sense, but will any one claim for an instant that it is attested for Jesus in any such manner or degree as, e. g., for Spinoza "the God-intoxicated man," of whom Schleiermacher said, "the Divine Spirit transfused him, the Infinite was his beginning and his end"? Yet we do not worship Spinoza nor any of his peers as the founder of a religion. This characterization given by Professor Case seems to be little less and little more than the figment of a pious imagination.

More interesting by far are the omissions of the Chicago professor. Naturally he has naught to say of the miraculous element in the Gospels. It is plain, however, that he discredits the same *in toto*. According to him we have not to deal with a Resurrection but with a "resurrection Faith"; the disciples never saw the Risen One—there was no Risen One to see—but they had "vision experiences." It is amazing how lightly our author skims over the thin ice in this deep-water region, but there can be no real doubt as to his meaning and conviction. For him the whole so-called miraculous element in the New Testament is at the very best merely fanciful. For him the structure of the Christian faith rests upon some kind of *lusion*, whether *illusion*, *delusion*, or *collusion*, or a merger of all three. It goes without saying that he nowhere gives any justification for this element or this basis. The great facts of proto-Christianity, the worship of Jesus and the mission to the Gentiles, receive no hint of explanation at his hands; they tower before us wholly unconnected with Professor Case's historical theories, utterly isolated and as destitute of relations as Melchisedec. Nor can any one perceive any motive for the fabrication of the Gospel wonders. Understood literally (as our critic understands them) they

could prove nothing until they were themselves proved, and being mere fictions they could never be proved at all. For Professor Case this miraculous element is far worse than the Old Man of the Sea for the Gospel, which may well exclaim, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It is hard indeed to see how he can read the Gospels with even the least patience, and how he can expound them is a mystery. None of this however is the fault, it is all only the grave misfortune, of Case,—to be wedded to a *passée* and faded theory that has too long outlived its usefulness.

When we now pass to the closing chapter on "Jesus' Significance for modern Religion," we find it still harder to be sure of our author's position. He is evidently greatly concerned to show that there is really such an abiding significance, but in finding any adequate reason therefor he seems to fail utterly. Indeed, the problem he sets himself is absolutely insoluble. The "historic Jesus" of the liberals was at most and at best simply an exceedingly pious man, possibly possessed of a genius for godliness, like John Wesley. All attempts to find something "unique" in this pure-human Jesus have always issued and must always issue in miserable fiasco. You do not seek behind the stove what you have not put there yourself. The liberal imagines a "unique" quality in his Jesus and then turns over every verse in the Gospels to find it there. It is still true, the lament of Werenfels:

"This is the book where each his dogma seeks,  
And this the book where each his dogma finds."

We have no reason whatever for supposing a pure-human Jesus superior to hundreds or even thousands of others whose names adorn the annals of our race. We might admire, reverence, even love his pure-human character, and if we only knew with some degree of certainty something that he said or did, we might draw inspiration from his life. But precisely the same and even more may be said of many far brighter stars in the firmament of authentic history. Undoubtedly also many thousands, even millions, have actually drawn hope, courage, inspiration, from the life of Jesus, but it is the divine Jesus of orthodoxy, not the pure-human Jesus of liberalism. Much as the liberals may descant upon their *Jesus-bild*, and desperately as they may strive to find it full of marvel and inspiration, I must be allowed to doubt whether a single one has ever found in it either the wonder or the uplift that he so earnestly desired. In spite of all their perfectly honest professions and intentions, the religious soul must still say of the liberal critics, "they

have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." *Experto crede*. The greatest of the liberals are coming to recognize this fact. Witness the words of Wellhausen at the close of his *Einleitung*: "For what has been lost with the Gospel, the historical Jesus, as basis of our religion, is a very doubtful and unsatisfactory substitute" (p. 115). Witness Bousset who speaks of the "transient" and the "eternal" in the personality of Jesus (reminding one of Kant's "empirical" and "transcendental" Self), who treats of Jesus as a "symbol" of the divine and so seems to Wobbermin to deprive him of all "significance as the source of our religion." Indeed it becomes every day more unmistakably clear that, as the orthodox Dunkmann affirms, "It is all over with the historic Jesus." Such a Jesus could henceforth be nothing more to us than Socrates or a hundred others; being a mere figment of the liberal imagination, he has lived his little day. But it is by no means all over with the real Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels, the Jesus of proto-Christianity, "the God Jesus" of Origen. The complete triumph of monotheism is the avowed mission of his "everlasting gospel" borne through mid-heaven on the wings of an angel crying to all nations, "Fear God and give him glory."

It seems strange then that the liberal critic who teaches the pure-humanity of Christ, who "preacheth another Jesus," a "different spirit" and a "different gospel," unknown not only to the church for 1800 years but still more unknown to the primitive Christians, apostles, and evangelists, who rejects all and several the teachings of all the creeds and the far sublimer faith of the "monotheistic Jesus-cult" (Deissmann) antedating all creeds, that *such a one*, no matter what his learning, ability, or integrity, should pose as the Defender of the Faith that he has himself destroyed. Ajax did indeed shield valiantly the fallen Patroclus, but it was Hector, not Ajax, that slew him. Stranger still, in this case the defense of the corse is an heroic effort to keep it dead. It is directed against the friends of the fallen, who come not indeed to anoint "the body of the Christ" unto sepulture, but to reanimate it, not with any pure-human nor even half-human half-divine life, but with a life all and solely divine and immortal as the Deity Supreme.